

# Coping with fires, floods and other natural disasters

There are simple things you should do to take care of yourself after an event like a fire or flood. It may be hard to know where to start.

## We suggest going back to basics:

- **Make contact** with your family and friends so they know you are safe
- Make sure you **eat** and **drink plenty of water**
- Arrange somewhere to **sleep**, somewhere to have a **wash** and some **clean clothes**
- Despite how much work you have got to do, try to take **regular breaks**

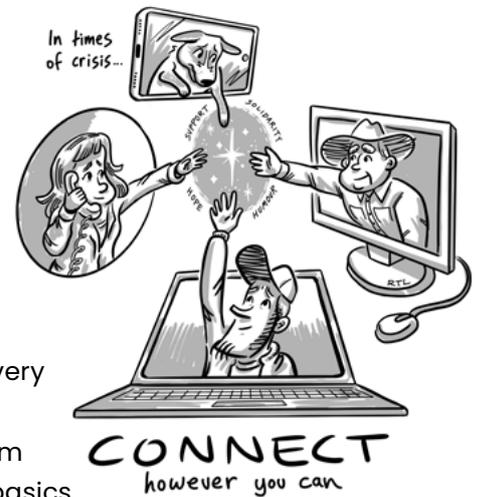
It is really important that your basic needs are met, before you try to achieve more complicated things that are higher up Maslow's 'Hierarchy of Needs' pictured below:



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## Once you've had some time to deal with the basics:

- Identify what you **still need to do**, what you **need help with** and **who** may be able to help. Some organisations that may be able to assist include:
  - » Emergency services
  - » Your local council or state government
  - » Australian Red Cross: **1800 733 276**
  - » Salvation Army: **13 72 58**
  - » St Vincent de Paul Society: [vinnies.org.au/page/contacts](http://vinnies.org.au/page/contacts)
  - » BlazeAid (provide assistance in rebuilding fences after fires and flood): [blazeaid.com.au](http://blazeaid.com.au)
  - » Conservation Volunteers: **1800 032 501**  
[conservationvolunteers.com.au/what-we-do/disaster-recovery](http://conservationvolunteers.com.au/what-we-do/disaster-recovery)
  - » Habitat for Humanity: **1800 885 599**
- Try not to make any big decisions or life changes until you feel calm and ready to do so, but acknowledge that some decisions about basics (e.g. immediate shelter, how to manage your stock) may need to be made immediately
- Acknowledge that you have experienced a distressing event and allow yourself to react to it. Try not to become annoyed with yourself if you become upset. It is a normal part of dealing with these events and does not mean you are not coping
- Avoid using alcohol or other drugs
- Try not to repress your feelings or block out thoughts about what has happened. Allow yourself to gradually confront what has happened. This will assist in accepting your experience
- Ensure you don't avoid places or activities on purpose
- Talking to people you trust about what has happened and how you feel will help you move on
- As much as practical, try to continue with your normal routine. Plan your days
- Do not forget to exercise- it is a great way to deal with stress
- Connect with family, friends and others in the community. Let them know if you need anything, whether it be time to rest, talk or some help with food or the clean up
- Make time to relax. This will allow your body and nervous system to calm after the event
- Make a list of jobs. Prioritise these jobs with the next major farm task in mind e.g. shearing, sowing, harvesting. This will help give you a sense of being organised and in control
- Take opportunities to connect with others in your community who have been similarly impacted, a problem shared with fellow sufferers breaks the isolation and provides more options and solutions
- If the event has stirred up any distressing memories from a previous event, try to deal with those memories separately



Learning techniques in the ifarmwell modules will also help.